

WARNINGS FROM THE DISTANT PAST
Excerpt from *Mysteries from Forgotten Worlds*
Charles Berlitz 1972
By Bhakta John Jagannatha



Artist's rendition of weapon of devastation in the Mahabharata

There is semi-historical indication of catastrophic destruction initiated and caused by man or gods acting like men, which is recorded in *Mahabharata*, sometimes called the *Illiad* of ancient India (but over eight times as long as Homer) and therefore more comprehensive and also explicit in detail. The *Mahabharata* is essentially a huge compendium of religious teachings, customs, history and legends concerning the gods and heroes of ancient India. It is also considered to contain elements pertaining to the conquest of India by the Aryan invaders from the north who invaded and conquered northern India several thousand years ago and probably destroyed, among other cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus Valley. This extremely ancient collection of books probably encompasses other records and legends current in the ancient period which it was compiled.

The *Mahabharata*, written in Sanskrit, is perhaps one of the most ancient religious and literary texts still in use today and, like the Bible which contains numerous references to historic events of countries neighboring to Israel, the Hindu classic may preserve bits of information from an older world that are not only picturesque but sometimes rather alarming.

When western students first began to study and comment on the *Mahabharata* during the period of British rule in India, certain detailed references to ancient air ships (*vimanas*) including even how to construct them and how they were powered, matter of fact descriptions of controlled fire power in warfare, rockets, and even the "arrow of

unconsciousness" (*mohanastra*) which rendered armies helpless. Early scholars customarily considered these references, decades before the invention of airplanes or poison gas, as poetic hyperbole and were accustomed, in the words of V. Ramachandra Dikshitar, "...to glibly characterize everything found in this literature as imagination and summarily dismiss it as unreal..."

Students of the Victorian era would, of course, have little understanding or feeling of coincidence in descriptions of "two story sky chariots with many windows" blazing with red flame "that race up into the sky until they look like comets," or ships that "soared into the air to the regions of both the sun and the stars."

A gigantic English prose translation of the *Mahabharata* was made by an Indian scholar, P. Chandra Roy, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, aided by funds from the Government of India, several of the Maharajas and other individual sources. This translator seemed to have a curious reaction to some of the descriptions of total warfare, remarking in one of his introductions that he, as a Brahmin (of the priestly caste) and not a Kshatriya (of the warrior caste) could not fully appreciate or approve of the descriptions of total carnage he was translating but judged them to be necessary to the masterpiece as a whole, especially as it concerned the actions of the gods.

Some of these descriptions may have been enigmatical to scholars of the last century who read and translated them but they are not especially mysterious or hard to understand to almost anyone alive today or who may still be alive in an uncertain future. The following excerpts from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are startlingly familiar to us in spite of the thousands of intervening years, telling of:

*A single projectile charged with all the power of the Universe. An incandescent column of smoke and flame, as bright as ten thousand Suns, rose in all its splendor...
...it was an unknown weapon, an iron thunderbolt, a gigantic messenger of death which reduced to ashes the entire race of the Vrishnis and the Andhakas.
...The corpses were so burned as to be unrecognizable. Their hair and nails fell out; pottery broke without any apparent cause, and the birds turned white. After a few hours, all foodstuffs were infected.*

And especially the following:-

...to escape from this fire the soldiers threw themselves in streams to wash themselves and all their equipment...

The destruction of the enemy army by the "iron thunderbolt" (certainly a more logical name than the "Fat Man" dropped on Nagasaki) is described in the following excerpt from the *Samsaptaka-Badha Parva* of the *Drona Parva* in an effective and poetic manner:

...Then Vayu (the presiding deity of that mighty weapon) bore away crowds of Samsaptakas with steeds and elephants and cars and weapons, as if these were dry leaves

of trees... Borne away by the wind, O King, they looked highly beautiful like flying birds...flying away from trees..."

And again, in the *Naryanasatra Mokshana Parva (Drona Parva)*, reference is made to the "Agneya weapon" incapable of being resisted by the very gods.

Meteors flashed down from the firmament...A thick gloom suddenly shrouded the host. All points of the compass were enveloped by that darkness...Inauspicious winds began to blow ...the sun seemed to turn round, the universe, scorched with heat, seemed to be in a fever. The elephants and other creatures of the land, scorched by the energy of that weapon, ran in flight...The very waters being heated, the creatures residing in that element began to burn...hostile warriors fell down like trees burnt down in a raging fire - huge elephants burnt by that weapon, fell down on the earth...uttering fierce cries ...others scorched by the fire ran hither and thither, as in the midst of a forest conflagration, the steeds...and the cars (chariots) also, burnt by the energy of that weapon looked...like the tops of trees burnt in a forest fire...

The after effects to the earth, one might infer, noted by some ecologist of prehistory:

...winds dry and strong and showering gravel blew from every side...Birds began to wheel making circles...The horizon on every side seemed to be covered with fog. Meteors - showering blazing coals fell on the earth from the sky...the Sun's disk...seemed to be always covered with dust...Fierce circles of light were seen every day around both the sun and the moon...A little while after the Kuru king, Yudisthira heard of the wholesale carnage of the Vrishnis in consequence of the iron bolt...(Mausala Parva)

Even a prayer to the Creator has come down to us, imploring divine intercession to stop the effects of the "final" weapon:

...O illustrious one - let the threefold universe - the future, the past and the present exist. From thy wrath a substance like fire has sprung into existence; even now blistering hills, trees and rivers and all kinds of herbs and grass in the mobile and immobile universe is being reduced to ashes! (Abhimanyu Badha Parva)

A most unusual excerpt from the *Mausala Parva* contains an oddly modern reminder relative to limitation, destruction and disposal of deadly missiles:

...an iron bolt through which all the individuals in the race of the Vrishnis and Andhakas became consumed into ashes...a fierce iron bolt that looked like a gigantic messenger of death...In great distress of mind the King caused that iron bolt to be reduced into fine powder. Men were employed, O King, to cast that powder into the sea...

Such strangely detailed reports, which make sense to us, but not at all to the first translator, must be considered in context of the times, spirit and outlook of those who wrote them. Ancient peoples, living in the "age of miracles," took all sorts of magical occurrences for granted and, above all, considered civilization to be a stream, a flux and

reflux of cultures rather than a continuous march forward. Scientific marvels or prophecies were simply noted and recorded as they found them, without any attempt at corroboration or thought that they might be re-examined in the light of actually having occurred by future generations.

THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND
Excerpt By Bhakta John Jagannatha

The **CURSE** of the **HOPE DIAMOND**

CAN IT BE POSSIBLE THAT SIVA, THE DREADED "GOD OF DESTRUCTION", LIVES IN THIS FIERY DIAMOND? THE ANCIENT HINDUS THOUGHT SO — AND TRAGEDY HAS COME TO EVERYONE WHO HAS POSSESSED IT.





Many years ago a fabulous blue diamond was worshipped by the Hindus of the Teluga Dynasty. Roughly cut in an egg shape and weighing 112 carats, it was believed to be the earthly home of the great god Siva.

Now Siva is a god of two faces. As The Creator, his people love him. As The Destroyer and Source of All Evil, his wrath is dreaded above that of all other gods.

While Siva's blue diamond was in the temple, peace reigned around it. But somewhere along the centuries the gem was torn from its resting place by thieves.

And when this happened, Priests of the Temple swore that a curse was upon it forevermore....

Its Fantastic Career

In 1642 a traveler to India, Jean Frauvenier, bought the blue diamond from a gang of thieves. After a series of untold hardships he finally got the stone smuggled into France in 1669, where he sold it to King Louis XIV. A few years later he was forced to leave his beloved Paris for good, and died in Moscow, an outcast.

King Louis XIV had the diamond cut down to 67 1/2 carats and it became the prize of the Crown Jewels. Madame de Montespan, the King's favorite, madly wanted to wear the blue stone. She did, and shortly thereafter the King threw her over for a new mistress. Nicholas Fouquet, Minister of Finance, next wore the gem at a festival. Right after the party he was arrested for embezzling funds and sent to prison, where he died 15 years later.



French aristocracy was at its pinnacle of glory when Louis XIV bought the blue diamond. Before long it was on the road to doom. Spain, Holland and England united against Louis and he began losing territory. The next king was Louis XV, who died of smallpox. Then came Louis XVI. During his reign, the blue gem was often seen hanging from the lovely necks of Princess Lambelle and Marie Antoinette. The lives of both these ladies, along with those of the king himself and thousands of other aristocrats, were cut short when the razor-sharp guillotine sliced through their throats to the strains of the Marseillaise....

After the bloody massacres of the French Revolution, the blue diamond disappeared until 1830, when it turned up in London. It had been cut again, and was now an oval stone of 44 1/2 carats – its present shape and size. It was bought by the Hope family, from whom it got its present name, and it was insured for \$1,000,000.

The "Curse of Siva" didn't stop when Lord Francis Hope became owner of the gem. His wife, the famed actress May Yohe, ran away with another man. Then Lord Hope went bankrupt. May Yohe wound up working for \$16.50 a week and died penniless. She often blamed the "cursed diamond" for her descent in fortune.

After Lord Hope's bankruptcy, the Hope Diamond was sold to the Sultan of Turkey by Simon Montherides. Simon and his wife and child all died together when they were thrown over a cliff while taking a ride.

The Sultan gave the diamond to his favorite wife, Subaya. Shortly thereafter he had her executed. As for the ruler himself, his country, like France, also became rent with revolution. He was dethroned and lost the diamond to Paris dealers, without getting a sou for it.

The next person to own it was Mrs. Evelyn Walsh McLean, who died in 1947. At one time her life was threatened by kidnappers. Her son Vincent was killed by an automobile. Her daughter, Evalyn, died from an overdose of sleeping pills. And Mr. McLean, who had purchased the Hope Diamond for his wife, died in a mental institution....



Matter Over Mind

It's hard to believe that a "Power of Evil" can reside in an inanimate stone. Yet it's also hard to brush aside the tragedies that always seem to follow the Hope Diamond by simply calling them "coincidences."

Perhaps the real answer lies in the fact that ancient Hindu priests knew – as modern psychologists know – that Siva, the Destroyer, doesn't really live in a blue diamond. He lives in our own minds. By putting a curse on the gem, they aroused subconscious fears in the minds of all future possessors of it. And tragedy always stalks those with a deep fear of it – even though their conscious minds might laugh at the fear.

Has this, then, been the secret of the "curse" of the Hope Diamond?

Hermann Volk

Whisper Magazine V03 N07 May 1950 25cents

AN INTRODUCTION TO UTTRAKHAND
A PILGRIMAGE GUIDE FROM THE 1970'S
Excerpts By Bhakta John Jagannatha



LAND OF GODS, UTTRAKHAND

The central Himalayas in Uttar Pradesh District Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Pithoragrah, Nainital, Almora, Pauri, Tehri and Dehradun make up this land of Uttarakhand, which has numerous temples of sacred and mythological importance - rivers, lakes, mountains, forests, lush verdant valleys, green meadows and glistening glaciers. In fact the four sacred shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri are the main attraction for saints and sages and God-fearing people. For the tourists of India and foreign tourists the Valley of Flowers is the main attraction in the Land of Gods, Uttarakhand.

During the puranic ages the Indian sages established four shrines of God, Jagannath Puri, Rameshwaram, Dwarka and Badrinath Puri, which are the centres of pilgrimage in India. Visits to these holy places are dependent on faith and the importance attached to them.

What is in this Guide ?

An Introduction to Uttrakhand

This is a complete Guide for Pilgrims, Travellers, visitors and also for foreign Tourists, who are going to the land of Gods *Uttrakhand*.

This Guide will inform you the altitude of mighty Mountains of *Uttrakhand* and distances of different places.

This Guide to Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Kailash and Manasarover, will help you to learn the ways, with two road maps.

This Guide will intimate you about latest Bus Routes and its freight and give *An Introduction* of all the important places worth seeing in *Uttrakhand*.

This Guide will tell you about the famous Glaciers of Yamunotri & Gangotri, hot water springs at Badrinath Puri and other places, Description about Snow-clad Himalayas of *Uttrakhand*.

This Guide has very latest informations about the Land of Gods "*Uttrakhand*"

CHAPTER I

In order to enable the pilgrims to be successful in their journey to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri and Gangotri, the following information is furnished:

Starting time for the journey to Badrinath:

The period from 15th April to 31st July and the months of September and October are suitable for journey from Rishikesh to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri.

In their own interest pilgrims are advised to carry with them a waterproof ground sheet, good sturdy walking shoes, woolen socks, head cover, a pair of blankets, towels and some of your traveling equipments. Boiled drinking water and a small First Aid Box

should also be carried because these are important precautionary measures. A torch and spare cells should be carried.

CLOTHING:

The visitors, travelers and pilgrims must possess woolen clothes and sufficient beddings, because all these places are too cold every time. It is noteworthy that blankets are furnished to needy pilgrims by the temple authorities at the houses of pandas and dharamshalas. However the pilgrims should always carry sufficient woolen clothing with them according to their status and mode of living.

FOODSTUFFS:

It is not necessary to carry more foodstuffs for a few days when you go on journey to Badrinath and Kedarnath, because several varieties of essential commodities are adequately available at Tehri, Srinagar, Devprayag, Karnaprayag and Chamoli. Whatever you get at Hardwar and Dehradun can be found at every halting station on the way of pilgrimage.

SPECIAL ATTENTION FOR TREKKERS:

The pilgrims who are fond of trekking are advised to have a special attention while climbing on the hills. Some people have habit of watching here and there, particularly watching natural scenery. Please note that such habit or practice results in tumbling down and eventually even a loss of life. The most comfortable conveyance (ponies) should be used while traveling on the hills. If you want to look at any scenery or a sublime beauty of nature, you must steadily stand up and see it to your complete satisfaction and then again start walking to the naturalist paradise.

After a long and climbing journey traveler naturally feels tired. The remedy for fatigue is that he should wash his feet with salt mixed hot water and then apply oil over his washed feet so that pain in feet will vanish and he will feel all right.

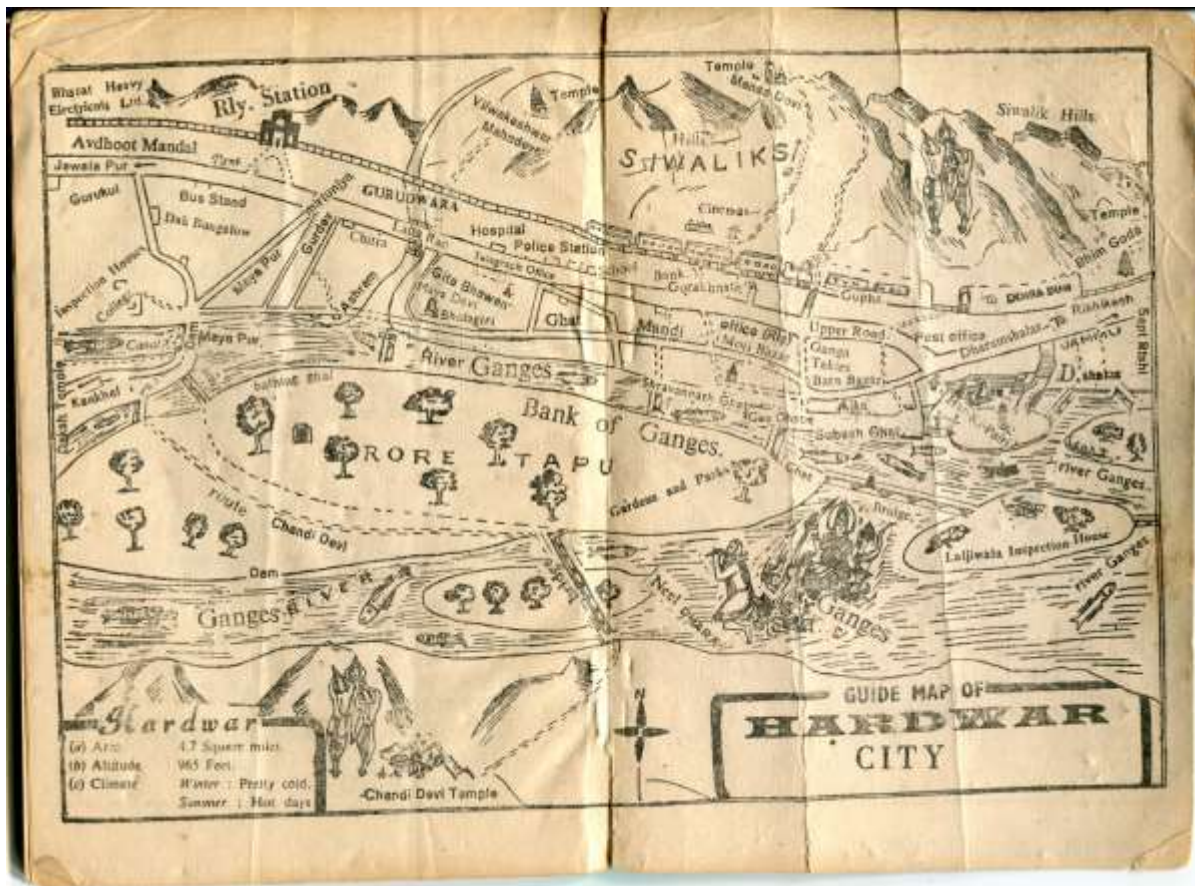
WEATHER OF UTTRAKHAND:

Before commencing journey to high hill stations, a meteorological report or weather conditions must be observed, because in cold regions weather is always changeable, it changes at any time on any day. Sometimes it is cloudy or rainy, and sometimes there is too much snow fall. During months of April and May the weather is stormy or windy. On those hill stations, occasionally, weather is shining brightly, sometimes it is mizzling and sometimes snowy peaks are seen glittering with bright sun. Sometimes a rainbow appears on the giant mountains in rainy season.

The climate is generally cold even in summer at Yamunotri, Gangotri, Panwali, Trijuninarain, Kedarnath and Badrinath and a few other important places of similar height, but during daytime in the months of April to October it is cool and pleasant, therefore best season for yatra is May to June & September to October. The months of July and August are rainy season.

CHAPTER II

HARDWAR THE GATEWAY TO BADRINATH:



PLACES OF INTEREST:

In Hardwar city some places of interest are:

Har-Ki-Pairi, Murtunjaya Mahadeva, Gurukul Mahavidyalya, Kushavert Ghat, Mayapur Dham, Subhash Ghat, Gurudawara Singh Shaba, Neel-Dhara Brahma Kund, Sapta Sarover, Pawan Dham, Ragvendra Temple, Gita Bhawan, and Bhim Goda.

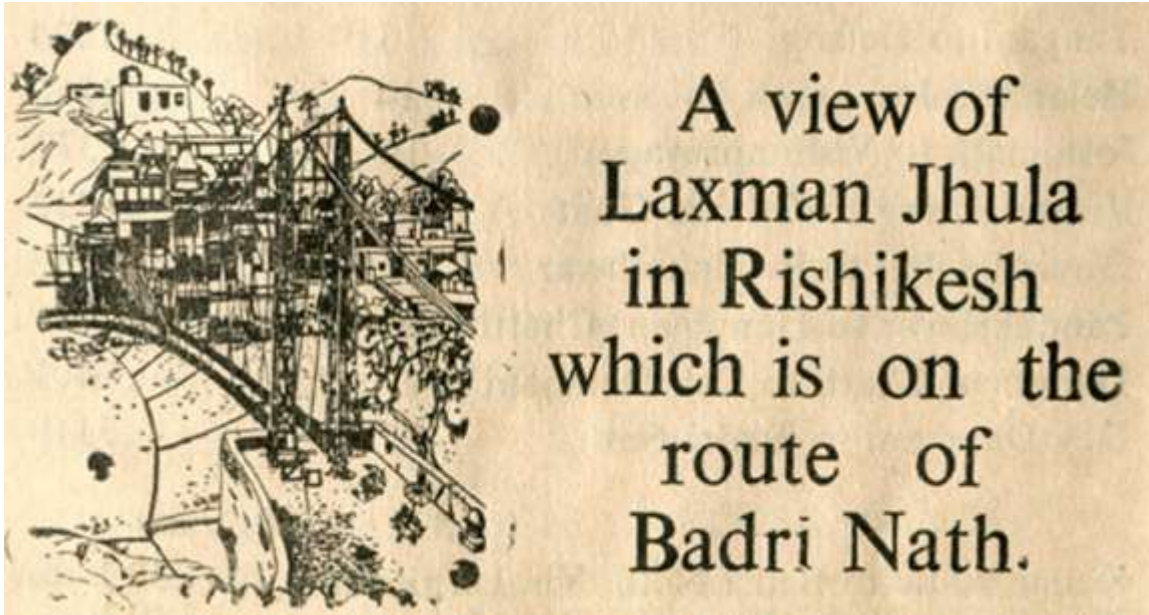
The most prominent of these places is Har-Ki-Pairi. The foot print of Lord Vishnu (Hari) has been impressed on a stone at this place. Ganga Temple is another most prominent place in Brahma Kund which has been situated at Har-Ki-Pairi. It is strongly believed that this is the holy place from where the celestial waters flow into the Ganges and a dip in this kund is a salvation from all sins. Each evening thousands of pilgrims attend the grand Ganga Arti performed at this place. This city is the home of ashrams and dharamshalas.

In Hardwar the temples of Mansa Devi, Chandi Devi, Maya Devi and Anjani Devi are visible. The temples of Shravan Nath Mahadeva, Bilvakeshwar Mahadeva, Neeleshwar, Navgraha, Baraha Khamba, Shankaracharya and Bholagiri have great importance in this city.

The supreme purpose of pilgrimage is to rise to spiritual heights. When this purpose is served, the pilgrims are liberated from sins and devilism and devoted to the pure life of righteousness, truth, love and purity.

Next Holy place - Rishikesh on the route of Badrinath and Kedarnath.

RISHIKESH:



In the direction 24 Km. off the right bank of Ganges, Rishikesh has been situated which is very important to pious Hindus for their sacred bath and temples although it is a very small town. Satya Narayan Temple is just on the way to Rishikesh which can be visited by pilgrims and tourists. Saints, sages, seers and ascetics use this site for their religious faith.

In Rishikesh, several Sanskrit pathshalas, dharamshalas, mandirs and kshettras have been situated. Thirteen story temple and Bharatji's Temple are famous here. Pinda Sharaddha is performed at Triveni Ghat. Rishikesh is the head-quarters of Baba Kali Kamliwala's Kshettras of oblation. Journey to every holy shrine of Utrakahand starts from here.

BADRIKSHETRA MAHATMYA

THE HOLY IMPORTANCE OF BADRINATH:

Arundhati said to her husband, "O my Lord please tell me in details the holy importance of Shri Badrinath which is beneficial to me and also to every one. What are the gains if visited by any one with pure and holy heart? I think this was related to Parvati by Lord Shiva."

Listening to the words of his wife Muni Vashishtha replied, "O darling, even if the most sinful person goes to the holy Badrinath he would be spiritually salvationised and obtain a place in paradise for himself. But it is not easy for any person to have the sight of Lord Badrinath."

"Only the person who had prayed to God throughout his life can have the sight of Lord Badrinath and is entitled to obtain spiritual salvation (Moksha) which is the last stage of peace and happiness. One who speaks Badrinath's name, all his sins are washed out and

his heart purified. The person who is full of crimes and who could not be freed from his sins at any other place can get 'Moksha' at Badrinath."

"The other most praiseworthy thing is that if any one presents clothes and ornaments to Shri Badrinath after having bathed in Holy Ganges, he is sure to have a seat in Paradise after the expiry of his life. Those who offer an Akhand Deep to Shri Badrinath are considered to be very lucky."

"O; darling Arundhati, whoever circumambulates Badrinath temple, and takes the charnamrita with holy heart from the feet of holy idol of Badrinath, is prayed by the Gods and says 'O pious soul, you will obtain the profit of one Ashwamedha Yajna.' Lord Badrinath has the empiric knowledge of all Vedas and Puranas and can bring one to the height of knowledge from ignorance. Lord Vishnu, the lord of lords, reflects His own virtue in His shape. The men and women should conduct their lives with strong devotions to Shri Badrinath ji."

This is the paramount importance of Lord Badrinath by which general benefits for body and soul are procurable for the eternal peace and happiness in Heaven through spiritual salvation.

CHAPTER III

BADRINATH:



In the Mythology of the Hindus, the region of the Himalayas land of meditation "Uttarakhand", in which the holy abode of Shri Badrinath ji has been situated in the extreme north of India at the confluence of the Ganga and Alaknanda rivers at a height of

3110 M. above sea-level. Himalayan shrines of Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath are situated at heights ranging from 3050 M. to 3660 M. above sea-level. A great religious importance has been attached to Badrinath Puri which was once surrounded by wild berries or "Badri" and so it was named "Badri Van". This land has been worshipped by saints and sages as it has been the abode of yogis, and great hermits.

Badrinath is guarded by the Nar and Narayan range near the towering Nilkanth Peak. The other hot water tanks are "Narad Kund" & "Surya Kund" in which pilgrims take holy bath. Vasudhara waterfall is flowing down from a great height just at a distance of 4 1/2 Km. to the north direction. Badrinath stands first in the pilgrimage programmes as it bears the highest degree of supreme faith and dedication to God. At the back side of Badrinath Temple a valley opens to Nilkanth Peak, which embodies all the divinity of the divine land. Early morning is the best viewing time of Nilkanth Peak. The pujari of Shri Badrinath Temple is known as the Rawal, who is Namboodripad Brahmin of Kerala. Adi Guru Shankaracharya was also a Namboodripad. The Rawal is appointed jointly by the Badrinath Temple committee and Maharaja of Tehri Garhwal. The Rawal is well-versed in Sanskrit and puja ceremonials.

The opening day of the temple is decided by the Chief Executive officer of the temple committee on consultation with astrologers and pandits but normally suitable time is during the last week of April or the first week of May every year. Special significance is attached to the Akhand Jyoti Darshan on the opening day. The closing day of the temple is also decided by the same way. Normally closing day falls during the second week of November. The temple closes with many ceremonies and full staff members and Rawal move down to Joshimath for the winter months.

During olden days, the travel in the Himalayan regions was most difficult and also dangerous owing to wild animals. Even during those ancient days thousands of people from every corner of India visited Badrinath Temple every year.

There is no historical record available as to the age at this holy temple, but reference to Lord Badrinath has been made in the Vedas, the holy book of the Hindus. This temple is situated at the bank at Alaknanda in the lap at the Narain Parvat, near a hot water spring - the Tapta Kund. This temple was worshipped as a Buddhist temple, when King Ashoka was ruling in India, but according to Skanda Purana the idol of Lord Badrinath was recovered by Adi Guru Shankaracharya from Nard Kund and was re-enshrined in the 8th century A.D. in this temple. The idol of Lord Vishnu (Badrinath) is made of black stone (Shaligram) and seated in a Padmasan posture.

The temple is divided into three parts. The Garbh-Griha in which the idol of Lord Badrinath is seated in the inner part of this place and canopy covered with gold sheet. Second part is known as Darshan Mandap in which puja ceremonies are performed and it can accommodate a few people because this is a very small place. Last of all is Sabha Mandap which is an outer hall, where devotees wait for darshan of Lord Badrinath. Darshan of Lord Badrinath is available in Sabha Mandap at 6:30 A.M. to 13:00 Noon and 4 P.M. to 9 P.M. The chanting of vedic hymns together with the chiming of bells creates

a heavenly atmosphere in the temple. Pilgrims can join the puja ceremonies after a dip in the Tapta Kund. Some of the morning pujas are: Mahabhishek, Abhishek, Gitapath and Bhagwat Path, while the evening pujas are Geet Govind and Arti.

HOLY HYMNS (ARTI)



IN PRAISE OF LORD BADRINATH

*Pawan Mand Sugandh Sheetal,
Hem Mandir Shobhitam,
Neekat Ganga Behat Nirmal,
Shri Badri Nath Vishwambharam.*

O Lord Badrinath, (Saviour of the world) you are adorned by the temple of snow and beautifully set near Holy Ganges where the cool breeze is blowing.

*Shesh Sumiran Karat Nisidin,
Dhart Dhyan Maheshwaram,
Ved Brahma Karat Stuti,
Shri Badri Nath Vishwambharam.*

Shri Badrinath ji, the Lord of the Himalayas, is being worshipped by Sheshnag, the Snake Lord. Even the Lord of Lords God Shiva is always busy in your meditation. The God of Creation (Brahma) and ancient holy book (Veda) have habitually been enchanting hymns in praise of Lord Badrinath.

*Shaki Gauri Ganesh Sharad,
Narad Muni Uchcharanam,
Yog Dhyan Apar Leela,
Shri Badri Nath Vishwambharam.*

There are also other Gods and Goddesses who often enchant in His praise. Those Gods and Goddesses are Shakti, Gauri Ganesh and Sharad and also saint Narada who are always busy in His praying and all these holy personalities are meditating upon the name of Lord Badrinath.

*Indra Chandra Kuber Dinkar,
Dhoop Deep Parkashtam,
Siddh Munijan Karat Jai Jai,
Shri Badri Nath Vishwambharam.*

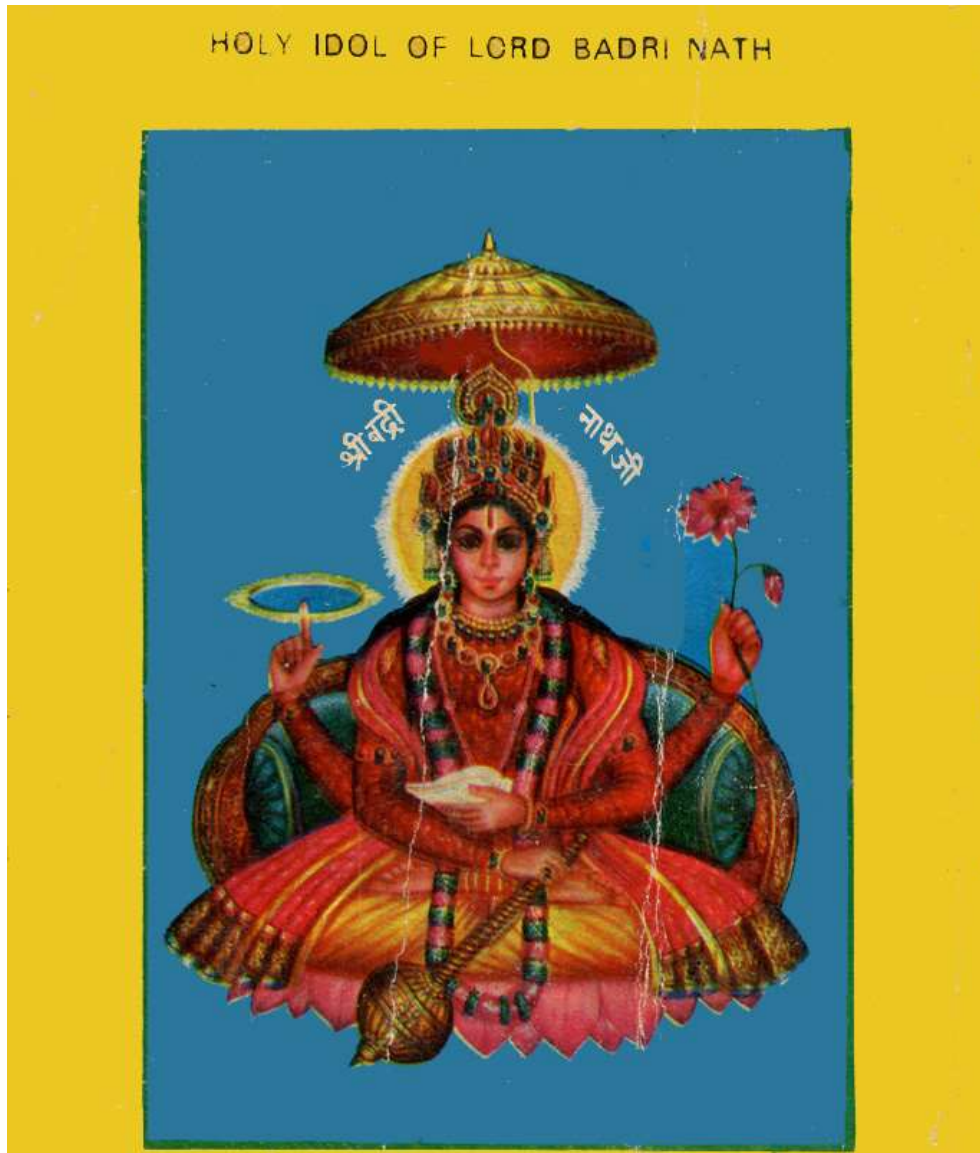
The other Gods by whom Shri Badrinath is enlightened are: God of Rain (Indra), Wealth God (Kuber) and Sun God (Vivasvan) and the Moon God (Chandra). Saints and Sages are singing the song of victory of Badrinath ji.

*Yaksha Kinnar Karat Kautuk,
Gayan Ghandharva Prakashtam,
Shri Lakshmi Kamla Chanwar Dolen,
Shri Badri Nath Vishwambharam.*

Apart from the above mentioned praises, the professional dancers and singers, Yaksha and Kinnar, who frequently please Gods by singing and dancing, also show their new items before Lord Badrinath. Gandharvas also display their empiric knowledge before Lord of the world. Moreover Laxmi Kamla, wife of Lord Vishnu, is also flapping Chanwar on the head of Lord Badrinath.

*Shri Badrinath Ki Parath Stuti,
Hoop Pap Venashanam,
Koti Tirath Bhayo Punya,
Prapt Yeh Phal Dayakam.*

The explanations in prose of holy hymns of Lord Badrinath are equivalent to the supreme importance of pilgrimages. If any one reads and heartily complies with them, he will spiritually gain advantage from Lord Badrinath ji's hymns, the paramount value of which should be realized by those who follow the teachings of Lord Badrinath.



PANCH (FIVE) BADRIS:

Lord Badrinath is worshipped at five different places under five different names in Uttrakhand.

VISHAL BADRI:

This place is known as Badri Vishal. At the time of prayer devotees say to each other "Jai Badri Vishal Ki". This is the main shrine of Lord Badrinath.

YOGDHYAN BADRI:

In ancient ages King Pandu meditated Pandukeshwar, ever since the Lord is worshipped here in the form of Yogdhyan. This place is 24 Km. from Badrinath and 20 Km. from Joshimath.

BHAWISHYA BADRI:

This place is situated at a height of 2744 M. above sea level and 17 Km. from Joshimath. Bhawisya Badri is worshipped in a small town.

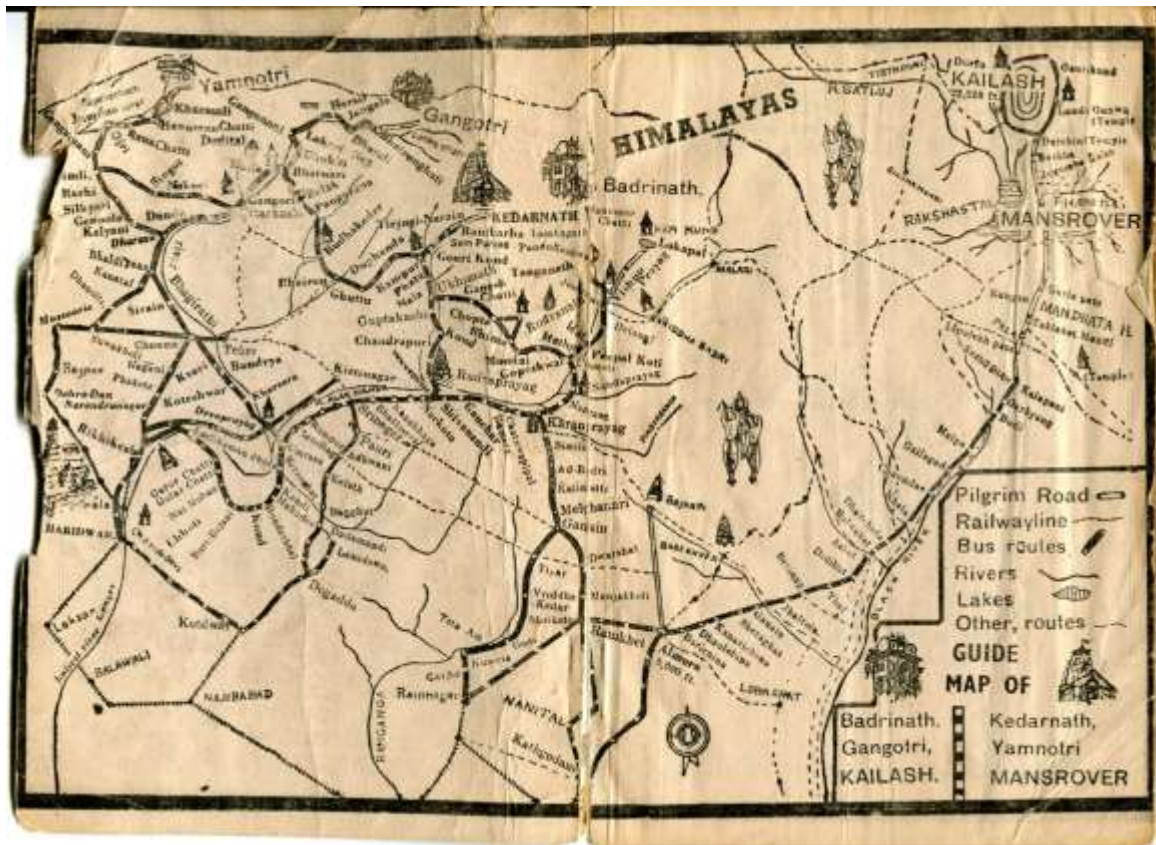
BRIDHA BADRI:

In this temple the idol of Lord Badrinath was worshipped for a short period by Adi Guru Shankaracharya. This temple is located at Animath, which is 17 Km. from Joshimath in the direction of Pipalkoti.

ADI BADRI:

Several temples of Gupta-Kal are visible at this place, but Narain Temple is the main attraction because of a black stone idol of Lord Vishnu. Adi Badri is situated 16 Km. from Karnaprayag on Ranikhet Road.

If a pilgrim heartily believes that all his sins will be washed away and he will attain spiritual salvation, there is no reason why it should not prove to be so at Badri Yatra. If a pilgrim has a strong faith in his own pilgrimage all sins can be cleared, the goal of one's own conviction, but, it is remembered that the test of such strong faith can be seen after the pilgrimage is over.



DEOPRAYAG:

This is the place where Alaknanda and Bhagirathi become the holy Ganga. This first important town on the Badrinath route is 70 Km. from Rishikesh.

SRINAGAR:

This is the ancient capital of Tehri Garhwal where cool waters of Alaknanda flow on unhindered. There is the ancient temple of Kamleshwar Mahadev. Srinagar is a developing town with colleges, a university and important Government offices. Srinagar is 35 Km. from Deoprayag, and a road branches off to Pauri and Kotdwara.

RUDRAPRAYAG:

This small and important town is 34 Km. from Srinagar. There are two routes going to Badrinath - via Rudraprayag and Ukhimath. Rudraprayag is the junction of the roads to the Shrines of Shri Badrinath and Shri Kedarnath. It is situated at the confluence of the Mandakini (flowing from Kedarnath 84 Km. from here) and the Alaknanda (coming from Badrinath 159 Km. from here). It is said that the sage Narad meditated here for several years. The ancient temple of Rudranath Ji and Jagdamba Devi are visible.

GHOLTIR:

This little place is situated 149 Km. from Badrinath and 10 Km. from Rudraprayag. This is the border place to Chamoli district.

GAUCHAR:

This place is 10 Km. from Gholtir and famous on account of a big trade fair which attracts thousands of visitors from all over the Uttarakhand, once in a year.

KARNAPRAYAG:

The name of this town is associated with Karna, the popular hero of the Mahabharat. A temple dedicated to the Goddess Umadevi stands at the confluence of Alaknanda. This is a good place for quiet holiday. This place is beautifully situated 11 Km. from Gauchar, where Pindar, flowing from the Pindari Glacier and travelers lodge is attractively situated on the bank of Pindar. State Bank of India, Government Inter College and Sub-divisional Head Quarter and the roads meet here coming from Rani Khet and Kausani.

NANDPRAYAG:

From here a road goes to the Ghat and Ramni areas. It is 22 Km. from Karnaprayag and surrounding at the confluence of the Alaknanda and the Nandakini. The Nandakini flows from a glacier located near Nanda Devi peak.

CHAMOLI:

This little town is attractively situated on the bank of Alaknanda and 10 Km. from Nandprayag, 96 Km. from Badrinath and 147 Km. from Kedarnath. There is a petrol pump at Gopeshwar, 10 Km. from here but no any good place for a night's halt available at this small town.

BIRAH:

This place is 8 Km. from Chamoli and situated on the bank of Alaknanda and the Birahi Ganga.

PIPALKOTI:

This is a small and clean beautiful town cradled in the lap of lush green mountains and terraced fields. Dharamshalas are available for night's rest at this place.

GARUR GANGA:

It is said that when Lord Badrinath was going to Badrivan He left his Garur at this place. From this small chatti every one can see some snow clad Himalayan peaks. This place is 5 Km. from Pipalkoti and situated on the bank of Garur Ganga.

TANGANI:

This place is 175 Km. from Kedarnath and 6 Km. from Garur Ganga and it is popular for cheap and attractive baskets made from local reeds.

HELANG:

This is a small chatti on the way to Joshimath and 6 Km. from Tangani. Kalpeshwar Mahadev, which is one of the Panch Kedar, is 9 Km. from here.

JOSHIMATH: (THE SEAT OF ADIGURU SHANKARACHARYA)

This is a most important town on the Badrinath route and 14 Km. from Helang. Jyotirmath, the seat of Adiguru Shankaracharya at Joshimath is worshipped by thousands of pilgrims every day, who organized Four Maths and Dhams in four corners of the country. Kalpa Briksha which is 2,400 years old is visible here. Narsing and Durga temple are very famous here. Every facility, telephone, telegraph and banking, are available to the travelers. Bhawishya Badri is 11 Km. from Joshimath and located in the valley of Tapovan. Lord Badrinath is worshipped in Narshingh Temple during the winter months when the temple of Lord Badrinath is closed. A few kilometers from Joshimath, the beautiful slopes of Auli and Gorson and several peaks including Nanda Devi and Neelkanth are visible.

VISHNUPRAYAG:

This place is situated at a distance of 205 Km. from Kedarnath and only 10 Km. from Joshimath. Every one will be happy to see the dancing water of Alaknanda and the Dhauli Ganga join together at this place. The Dhauli Ganga comes from the Niti Valley.

GOVIND GHAT:

This is a small place and only 10 Km. from Vishnuprayag. From here a zig-zag bridge path trails its way for 15 Km. along Govind Dham, which is main station for the treks to Sri Hemkund Sahib and Valley of Flowers.

PANDUKESHWAR:

This place is 24 Km. from the Badrinath, 219 Km. from Kedarnath & 4 Km. from Govind Ghat. The temples of Pandukeshwar are dedicated to the Yogdhyan Badri, visible here. It is said that King Pandu lived here during the last few days of his life.

HANUMAN CHATTI:

This old chatti is situated 9 Km. from Pandukeshwar. It is said that Hanuman ji meditated here & pleased Lord Badrinath. Pilgrims can see a small Temple of Hanuman ji here. It is also said that Pandavas performed puja of Hanuman at this place and Hanuman gave his darshan to them, so this chatti became Hanuman Chatti.

DEV DARSHANI:

Here the valley of Badrivan opens out into a heavenly landscape to behold a view of the temple of Badrinath. Dev Darshani is 2 Km. from Badrinath, 241 Km. from Kedarnath and 13 Km. from Hanuman Chatti. From here to Badrinath is through a wide open valley.

TAPTA KUND & NARAD KUND:

The hot water springs come out from beneath the Garur Shila and fall into a tank. A dip in Narad Kund and Tapta Kund is considered very holy and darshan of Badrinath is always preceded by a holy dip in both kunds. Around the Tapta Kund, Narad Shila, Narsing Shila, Barah Shila, Garur Shila and Markandey Shila have acquired mythological importance. The Panch Dhara (Five Streams) Prahlad Dhara, Kurma Dhara, Urvasi Dhara, Bhrgu Dhara and Indra Dhara, are most famous in Badrinath Puri. The Brahma Kapal is situated on the bank of Alaknanda and used for Shradh ceremony by religious Hindu.

In the lap of Nar Parvat, on the opposite of Alaknanda, there are two small lakes in which a large block of stone, which carries one eye Sesha-Nag and the formation of eye is natural. On the out skirts of the Bamni village there is a temple dedicated to Urvasi. Charanpaduka is 2 Km. from Badrinath and here is a boulder bearing the foot print of Lord Vishnu. Ponies are useful for this trip.

MANA:

The temple of Mata Murti is situated in the valley of Alaknanda opposite to the Mana village and Mana is 3 Km. from Badrinath Puri. Bhimapul (Bridge) on Saraswati is visible on the outskirts of Mana. The Mana village is full of caves i.e. Vyasa Gupha, Ganesh Gupha, Bhim Gupha and Muchkanda Gupha are visible here.

KESAVAPRAYAG AND VASUDHARA:

The Saraswati emerges from a glacier about 3 Km. north of Mana and the confluence of Alaknanda and Saraswati is known as Kesavaprayag. Vasudhara Falls (122 M. height) are 3 Km. from Mana and 8 Km. from Badrinath Puri. Pilgrims can see Alakapuri Glacier from here. Laxmivan is 4 Km. from Vasudhara Falls and 12 Km. from Badrinath Puri. It is said that goddess Laxmi meditated here. This place is full of Bhoj-Patra trees.

The mountains of Nar and Narain meet at Chakratirth, which is 9 Km. from Laxmivan and 21 Km. from Badrinath Puri.

SATOPANATH LAKE AND ALAKPURI:

Satopanath Lake is 25 Km. from Badrinath and 4 Km. from Chakratirth and situated at a height of 4402 M. above sea level. The weather is generally unsettled so the journey from Vasudhara Falls to Satopanath is full of unexpected. The Swargarohan Mountains are full of snow and Sonkund, Vishnu Kund, and Surya Kund are some small pools of water here.

Alakapuri Glacier is 3 Km. from Laxmivan and 15 Km. from Badrinath Puri and situated at the base of Balkun Peak, 6047 M. above sea level. Narain Parvat almost divides glacial zones of Alakapuri and Gauhmukh. Alaknanda starts her journey after touching the feet of Lord Badrinath and flows on to Deoprayag. Nilkanth Peak can be seen from this place.

CHAPTER IV

KEDARNATH **THE ABODE OF LORD SHIVA**

This famous holy town of Lord Shiva has been situated at a height of 3583 M. above sea-level on a marshy plain, on the slope of Himalayas. This is the place where Lord Shiva's Lingam has been installed in the beautiful temple where the perpetual snow clad exists on the Himalayas and down to the flower-decked Madakini Valley. The story runs that Kedarnath was constructed by Pandavas to atone for their commitment of their sins after the great war of Mahabharat.

On the top of the hill, Bhairava's temple is seen to the south of Kedarnath. The inside walls of Kedarnath temple have been excellently carved with images, the significance of which has been realized by all visitors.

It has a Mandap and Garbh Griha. In the centre of Garbh-Griha there is a rock, which is worshipped as Lord Shiva. There is a very large nandi visible in the Mandap. Pradakshins path is worshipped as Lord Shiva and there are many idols and small temples on the outer of this place. The Shiva Pinda is one of the twelve Jyotirlings of Shiva. In the temple morning puja is called Nirwan Darshan and evening puja is called Shingar Darshan. The morning pujas are Shubh Prabhat, Balbhog, Mahabhisek, Rudrabhisek, Ashotar, and Shiva Puja. Evening pujas are Shiva Ashtotar, Shiva Sahasranam, Shiva Namavalik, Shiva Mahiman Stotra and Ekanta Seva. The opening date of the Temple usually falls during the last week of April and temple closes on the day after Diwali festival. Some pandas of Kedarnath are scholars of Sanskrit, and they live in the villages around Gupta Kashi and Ukhimath. Around the Kedarnath, Hans Kund, Udak Kund, and Ret Kund are most important and have their religious significance. All is bright and beautiful at Kedarnath and with the surrounding areas, Gandhi Sarovar (3/4 Km.), Basuki Lake (5 Km.), Bhaironath Temple (1.5 Km.), and Samadhi of Adiguru Shankaracharya are visible.

It is no wonder that Adiguru Shankaracharya chose to enshrine Lord Shiva in this land, where the unholy become holy and the holy become holier. The Temple of Kedarnath can first be seen 1/2 Km. from Garur Chatti and set in an area of rich grassy land with towering white mountains, mantled with snow in the background. The temple is magnificent in its style and architecture but no historical records found relating to its origin or construction.

Lord of Lords

Shiv Shanker

Mahadev

of

Kedarnath.



PANCH (FIVE) KEDAR

The parts of Shiva's body - hump, arms, face, navel and hair appeared at Kedarnath, Tungnath, Rudranath, Madmaheshwar and Kalpeshwar. These five places are known as Panch Kedar.

1. KEDARNATH:

It is said that Lord Shiva fled here from Banaras to escape the Pandavas and being defeated by them assumed the form of a bull. Lord Shiva gave them darshan and Pandavas worshipped the hump of Lord Shiva at Kedarnath.

2. TUNGNATH:

This famous temple is situated at a height of 3680 M. above sea-level and from here pilgrims can view the peaks of Panch Chuli, Nanda Devi, Dunagiri, Nilkanth, Kedarnath and Bandar Poonch. This place is 30 Km. from Ukhimath and 5 Km. from Chopta.

3. RUDRANATH:

Lord Shiva is worshipped here as Neel Kanth and it is a 20 Km. trek from Gopeshwar. Vaitarini water stream is flowing here.

4. MADMAHESHWAR:

A temple of Lord Shiva is located at great height, which is 30 Km. from Gupta Kashi. It is said that navel of Lord Shiva re-appeared here after disappearing from Kedarnath.

5. KALPESHWAR:

This place is 14 Km. from Joshimath and 9 Km. only by the crossing of Alaknanda at Helang. There is a small rock temple of Lord Shiva and the entrance to this temple is through a cave.

SRI BADRINATH TO KEDARNATH

While going from Badrinath to Kedarnath you must return to Kund, where you find two routes are going to Sri Kedarnath.

Route No. 1. Via Rudraprayag 243 Km.

Route No. 2. Via Ukhimath 230 Km.

The road to Kedarnath goes along the bank of holy Ganga for 30 Km. from Rishikesh and it reaches Biasi. From Biasi road starts to climb to Sakhnidhar, which is at the height of 1100 M. from sea-level and then descends to the level of Ganga and continues on to Deoprayag.

The months of May, June and September, October are best seasons for Kedarnath yatra. November to April there is snow bound. May to November cold and monsoon season is July to September.

RISHIKESH TO DEOPRAYAG (70 KM.)

DEOPRAYAG: (BIRTH PLACE OF HOLY GANGA)

Deoprayag is the first important town on the route of Uttarakhand where Alaknanda from Satopanth and Bhagirathi from Gaumukh become the holy Ganga. Pilgrims feel happiness to visit Sangam and enjoy a bath. Famous temple of Sri Raghunath ji is visible & Pind Sharadha are performed at Sangam by religious Hindu. A road which is 35 Km. goes along the banks of Alaknanda to Srinagar via Bagwan, Maletha and Kirti Nagar.

This road is most suitable for motor cars and other vehicles, which is on the right bank of the Ganges River and a footpath is on the left bank of this river. Hardwar to Deoprayag is 94 Km. by bus via Rishikesh, Gular Chatti, Semal Chatti, Byasghat and Umrasu.

SRINAGAR:

Srinagar is 105 Km. from Rishikesh, 118 Km. from Kedarnath and 60 Km. from Tehri. This ancient capital of Tehri Garhwal was founded by King Ajayapal and was its capital until 1803. The temple of Kamleshwar Mahadev dedicated to Lord Shiva is situated on the bank of Alaknanda. Pauri town is situated about 29 Km. from here and Kotdwara is 137 Km. away.

RUDRAPRAYAG:

This small but important town is last shopping place for those travelers who are going to Kedarnath, Madmaheshwar Mahadev, and Kalimath and which is the junction of three hill districts of Pauri, Tehri and Chamba.

TILWARA:

A road coming from Tehri meets the main road going from Rishikesh to Kedarnath here and this place is 9 Km. from Rudraprayag. The road to Kedarnath passes through a tunnel and going along the bank of the singing waters of Mandakini.

AGASTMUNI:

It is said that sage Agastmuni meditated here and now he is worshipped in the local temple of Agastya. This little town is situated at a distance of 10 Km. from Tilwara and full of green forests on the bank of the Mandakini.

KUND CHATTI:

This chatti is located 173 Km. from Rishikesh and 15 Km. from Agastmuni. One road going to Kedarnath via Gupta Kashi and second to Chamoli via Ukhimath from here.

GUPTAKASHI:

This is situated at a height of 1479 M. above sea-level. Cradled in the hill slopes opposite Guptakashi, is the village of Ukhimath. Mankarnika Kund is a holy small pond at this place. The pujaris of Kedarnath live in the villages near Guptakashi. There is gate system from here to Gauri Kund and travelers are requested to check gate time from traffic police. The road is narrow and unmetalled. This is an important place on the routes to Kalimath, Madmaheshwar and Kedarnath. Ardha Narishwar and Chandra Sekhar Mahadev temples are ancient and visible. The snow-clad Chaukhamba and other mountain peaks look beautiful from here.

NALA CHATTI:

This is a small place where Durga Devi is worshipped in the form of Lalita Devi and a Buddhist Shrine is also located here. Guptakashi is 1 1/2 Km. from here.

PHATA:

It is situated 192 Km. from Rishikesh. The road from Guptakashi to Soneprayag via Phata is unmetalled but it is suitable for motors, except in rainy season.

RAMPUR:

This small village is situated 23 Km. from Guptakashi and is a better place for a night's halt than Soneprayag.

SONEPRAYAG:

This little village is situated on the bank of Mandakani and Songanga, which comes from Kedarnath and Busuki Lake respectively. At the time of yatra the Hill Development Corporation sets up a tent colony here and provides accommodation, water and electricity. A road also going to Gaurikund which is 5 Km. from here.

GAURIKUND:

This place is 209 Km. from Rishikesh and 5 Km. from Soneprayag. Here an ancient temple dedicated to Goddess Gauri is very famous and near the temple there are two hot and cold water tanks. This place is the last motorhead on the route to Kedarnath.

RAMBARA:

This is small seasonal chatti and the 7 Km. trek from Gaurikund to Rambara passes through green forests and every one can see several water falls near to this place.

GARUR CHATTI:

The peak under which the Temple of Kedarnath (3 Km. trek) is situated can be seen from here.

KEDARNATH:

It is an easy and enjoyable trek from Gaurikund to Kedarnath which is only 14 Km. via Rambara and Garur Chatti. The entire route is well dotted with temples, green forest, lush valleys, waterfalls and alpine flowers of various shades.

Three streams form large glacier and Dudha Ganga from a mountain - they all unite to form Mandakini. Mahapanth is known as the way to Heaven.

BADRINATH TO KEDARNATH VIA UKHIMATH ROUTE NO. 2

This route is not popular as the Rudraprayag route, because of hard climbing to Chopta. Ukhimath is 5 Km. from Kund and during the winter months pujaris of Kedarnath move here and worship Lord Shiva in this town. The temple of Lord Shiva, Parvati, Usha Mandhata and Anirudha are visible here.

Dogalbhita is 24 Km. from Ukhimath and here is Forest Rest House available to stay. From here next is Chopta, from where every one can see the view of the majestic peaks of Himalayas. Mandal is a small chatti and situated in the valley of same name.

GOPESHWAR:

This place is 11 Km. from Mandal and the new headquarters of Chomoli district. Most of the district offices are located here. Shiva Temple is the main attraction of Gopeshwar and there is a petrol pump on the road.

CHAMOLI:

This place is 134 Km. from Kedarnath and 10 Km. from Gopeshwar and situated on the bank of Alaknanda. Badrinath is 96 Km. from here. Please note that Soneprayag to Ukhimath 36 Km. by bus.

Attractive and Beautiful Mountains of Uttrakhand

	Altitude	
		Meters
1. Tribhuj Mountain	5057	
2. Ronti Mountain	6065	„
3. Hanuman Mountain	6076	„
4. Swargarohini Mountain	6254	„
5. Nandi Ghunti Mountain	6314	„
6. Bandarpoonch Mountain	6517	„
7. Bethartoli Mountain	6354	„
8. Kirti Stambh Mountain	6402	„
9. Jogin Group Mountain	6466	„
10. Nilkanth Mountain	6597	„
11. Barte Kanta Mountain	6579	„
12. Shiving Mountain	6544	„
13. Panwali Dhar Mountain	6665	„
14. Nandakhat Mountain	6674	„
15. Devistan Mountain	6680	„
16. Maiktoli Mountain	6805	„
17. Mrigathuni Mountain	6857	„
18. Nanda kot Mountain	6863	„
19. Changbang Mountain	6865	„
20. Spetic Prishtwan Mountain	6905	„
21. Panch Chuli Mountain	6905	„
22. Kalanka Mountain	6933	„
23. Deoban Mountain	6979	„
24. Dunagiri Mountain	7068	„
25. Trisul Mountai	7122	„
26. Chaukhamba Mountain	7140	„
27. Mana Mountain	7274	„
28. Kamet Mountain	7738	„
29. Nanda Devi Mountain	7818	„

CHAPTER V

THE VALLEY OF FLOWERS

This beautiful valley is full of various kinds of flowers and so it is called The Valley of Flowers and also known as Bhyundar valley. Valley of Flowers was discovered by Frank Smythe in 1931.

HARDWAR TO THE VALLEY OF FLOWERS

Route from Hardwar to Govind Ghat is same as mentioned in the chapter of Hardwar to Badrinath. Govind Ghat is 294 Km. from Hardwar via Rishikesh, Deoprayag, Srinagar, Rudraprayag, Gholter, Gauchar, Karnaprayag, Chamoli, Bihari, Pipalkoti, Garur Ganga, Tangani, Helang, Joshimath and Vishnuprayag and travelers can complete this journey by bus, jeep and their own vehicles and from Govind Ghat to the Valley of Flowers it is a 19 Km. trek.

Singh Sabha Gurudwara is situated at Govind Ghat, Puina and Ghangaria, and rest house is available for stay. The trek to Flowers Valley is one of varied scenic beauty after crossing the bridge over Alaknanda. It is 4 Km. trek from Ghangaria to the Valley of Flowers and full of snow bridges, alpine flowers, and glaciers. The stream of Laxman Ganga and view of Kak Bhusandi Valley are visible. Crossing the bridge over Laxman Ganga, which is 1/2 Km. from Ghangaria, travelers can go to the Valley of Flowers by the way of left side and right side way is going to Sri Hemkund Sahib.

The best time to visit the Flowers Valley is mid July to mid August during the rains. Only the early varieties of flowers can be seen in the months of May and June and in the last days of September the flowers have withered and died. Some of the popular flowers of the valley are - white and red Potentillas, Androsaca, Nomocharis, Fritillaries and large purple Asters. Flowers Valley is about 5 Km. in length, 2 Km. in width and concave in shape and situated at a height of 3352 M. (lowest point) above sea-level and 3658 M. is highest point of its situation. This valley is divided by a stream called Pushpawati and Pushpawati stream joins with Laxman Ganga, which is flowing from Hemkund at Ghangaria. Across the glacier pass route going to Bank Kund, Gamsali Valley and restricted area of Niti Valley.

CHAPTER VI

SRI HEMKUND SAHIB

THE LAKE OF GURUGOBIND SINGH JI

Hemkund has been situated at a height 4329 M. above sea-level, and has been surrounded by seven mountains of snow clad peaks, and their reflection in the lake is visible. The water of beautiful lake at this place is sweet and clean. The lake is full of lotus flowers, around which the blooming grassy fields are existent, which gives a clear picture shining beauty of splendid grandeur.

Pilgrims are requested that if they are in great number they should remain at Hemkund and are in lesser members, they should return to Ghangaria. Flowers Valley is at a distance of 4 Km. from Ghangaria from where a path goes to Hemkund and another foot path to Flowers Valley. Literally, "Hem" means snow and "Kund" means tank and so the name is "Hemkund" which has been derived from these two words "Hem" and "Kund". The most suitable period for journey to Hemkund is between August and September every year, after which journey is rather impossible due to extreme cold.

Guru Govind Singh ji made a reference in the holy book of Guru Granth Sahib that he had meditated on the shores of a lake, which was surrounded by seven snow covered peaks and it is believed that Guru Sahib had chosen Hemkund for meditation and he was famous as Rishi Medhasa; in one of his previous birth. This holy lake was discovered by Havaladar Sohan Singh in 1930 and has become a pilgrimage centre of Sikhs and Hindus and people of different religions and nationalities.

JOURNEY TO HEMKUND SAHIB

From Rishikesh, motor bus leads up to Govind Ghat which is 270 Km. from Rishikesh and 20 Km. from Joshimath, as mentioned in the chapter of Badrinath Yatra. Pilgrims can reach Govind Ghat by bus, car or jeep. The trek to Sri Hemkund Sahib starts from here and porters and ponies are available for the 20 Km. trek via Pulna, Bhyundar and Ghandaria.

There is a beautiful Gurudwara at Govind Ghat and Ghangaria with the arrangement of lodging and Langar. Kalgi Dhar dharamshala & rest house also available at Ghangaria to stay. The natural beauty of that pleasant place is enhanced by the tall Deodar trees. The blankets and other warm clothes are furnished to pilgrims by the authority of Gurudwara. The 5 Km. journey from Ghangaria to Hemkund is most difficult because of a difficult ascent. Therefore, it is essential that the pilgrims must carry with them water bottle, hill sticks, rubber sole shoes, and woolen clothes because they have to bear a biting cold under the pressure of snowfall. In case of hill diarrhea, headache, travel and altitude sickness, pilgrims are advised to carry a small first aid box with antiseptic, mosquito repellent and band-aids. Hem Ganga which comes from Hemkund joins with Pushpawati at Ghangaria and becomes Laxman Ganga and the waters of Laxman Ganga are a constant delight to the trekkers.

CHAPTER VII

YAMUNOTRI

THE CRADLE OF THE YAMUNA

The temple of Yamunotri has been built on the left bank of Yamuna on the Kalind Parvat at a height of 4421 M. above sea-level and is the main temple of worship. There are a few hot water kunds very famous in which Surya Kund is the most important kund. Dibya Shila is also worshipped near Surya Kund. Yamuna Bai Kund is also used for a holy bath. Yamunotri is 246 Km. from Hardwar and 6 Km. from Jankibai Chatti. The temple opens on the auspicious day of Akshaye-Tritiya (last week of April or first week of May) and closed on the sacred day of Diwali.

The nice and helpful pandas of Yamunotri live in the village of Kharsali which is situated near Jankibai Chatti on the other bank of Yamuna. It is said that Asit Muni lived here and he bathed daily in Yamuna and Ganga but when he could not go to Gangotri on account of his old age, a stream of Ganga came out before him at Yamunotri. Pilgrims can also go to Yamunotri from Dehradun and Mussoorie, but this route is useful only for car owners, but those who have to depend on public transport they should start the journey from Rishikesh. Best season is May & June and September & October for the yatra of Yamunotri. November to April are snow bound and May to November are cold and monsoon in the month of July to September. Please note that Rishikesh to Hanuman Chatti is 209 Km. by bus and from Hanuman Chatti to Yamunotri is 13 Km. trek.

NARENDRA NAGAR:

About 2 Km. from Rishikesh there are two roads. Muniki-Reti one goes to Badrinath, Kedarnath and second to Gangotri and Yamunotri. Narendra Nagar is 16 Km. from Rishikesh. Most of the government district offices of Tehri Garhwal are located here and there was a palace of Maharaja Narendar Shah. Kunjapuri is 9 Km. from here which affords a panoramic view of snow clad Himalayas.

CHAMBA:

The delightful place with pleasing climate is Chamba, which is 62 Km. from Rishikesh. Pilgrims can see the peak of Bandarpooch from here. A road going to Mussoorie, which is 55 Km. from here, on this road the famous temple of Surkanda Devi is visible which is 21 Km. from Chamba.

DOBATA:

This place is 17 Km. from Chamba and 79 Km. from Rishikesh and the town of Tehri is 4 Km. from here. Travelers going to Gangotri and Yamunotri must abandon the road to Tehri and take the one to Dharasu. The roads to Utrakashi and Srinagar meet here.

TEHRI:

The old capital Tehri, situated at the height of 770 M. above sea-level and 21 Km. from Chamba, was founded by Maharaja Sudershan Shah of Tehri Garhwal. Tehri is at the junction of two rivers - Bhagirathi and Bhilangana and also the junction of four important roads, i.e. Deoprayag, Uttrakashi, Srinagar and Tilwara.

DHARASU:

This place is 41 Km. from Dobata and the border place district of Uttrakashi. Khurmola meets the Bhagirathi at Dharasu and road to Gangotri trails its way along the bank of Bhagirathi.

BRAHMAKHAL:

This small place is 15 Km. from Dharasu and 159 Km. from Hardwar.

BARKOT:

This place is 40 Km. from Brahmakhal and 1828 M. above sea-level. The road climbs to Rarikadanda and then descends to Barkot, which offers to travelers every charm in forest, mountain and valley. A view of Bandarpooch Peak can be seen from here. A road from Sussoorie and Kalsi meet here and road to Yamunotri starts its way along the bank of Yamuna.

SAYANA CHATTI:

The halting place of Sayana Chatti is 29 Km. away from Barkot. Gangani is 7 Km. from Barkot and Kuthnaur is 9 Km. further on from Gangani. Sayana Chatti is a busy village and villagers from surrounding areas come here in search of work in the season of yatra.

HANUMAN CHATTI:

This is a very beautiful small chatti and 5 Km. from Sayana Chatti. The trek to the holy shrine of Yamunotri starts from here and Yamunotri is 13 Km. further on from here via Phool Chatti and Jankibai Chatti. Phool Chatti is 5 Km. from Hanuman Chatti and 2 Km. further is Jankibai Chatti. This 7 Km. path is most enjoyable climb.

JANKIBAI CHATTI:

Jankibai Chatti to Yamunotri is 6 Km. and trek continuous climb. Ponies and dandies are available here. Post office, police post and some shops are opened up during the yatra seasons only. The last 1/2 Km. climb journey to Yamunotri is almost straight, but it is a journey into a paradise and shrubs permeate the cool mountain air. This place is 216 Km. from Rishikesh and last halting place on Yamunotri route.

NOTE - Pilgrims coming from Yamunotri and going to Gangotri can proceed to Uttarkashi without going into Dharasu Chatti, they can turn off at the junction 2 Km. before Dharasu Chatti.



CHAPTER VIII

GANGOTRI

WHERE THE GANGA DESCENDED ON EARTH

The temple of Ganga is situated on the right bank of the Bhagirathi (Ganga) and its journey can be seen in various moods deep and silent in the lower plains, but at Gangotri, Bhagirathi is gurgling, tossing, frothing and singing an ecstatic melody. Bhagirathi is quite different from Alaknanda, Sarasvati and Yamuna, so the water of Gangotri is carried to Rameshwaram in South India and offered to Lord Shiva. There are also a few ashrams and dharamshalas on the left bank of Bhagirathi.

The pujaris and pandas are living in the nearest village Mukhwa and all the pujas are offered to Gangaji in the Gangotri temple and also on the bank of Ganga River.

The holy temple of Gangotri was constructed by the Gorkha General A.S. Thapa and is situated at a height of 3140 M. above sea-level. Near the temple of Gangotri the slab of stone on which King Bhagirath is believed to have meditated is called the Bhagirathi Shila. Water collected from Gangotri does not contain any impurities, even after being kept for several years. When one takes a holy dip in the Ganges at Gangotri, it is believed that all sins are cleansed away. The opening and closing days are same as Yamunotri. Gangotri is 228 Km. from Yamunotri and 248 Km. from Rishikesh. Gauri Kund and Dev Ghat are very famous here. Best season for yatra is May, June, and September, October. November to April are snow bound months, May to November are cold and July to September are full of monsoon.

The road to Gangotri and Yamunotri are same. Dharasu is 120 Km. from Rishikesh and travelers have to follow the route to Gangotri via Uttarkashi from here.

UTTARKASHI:

The prosperous town of Uttarkashi is situated on the bank of Ganga River and is a town of historical temples, ashrams and dharamshalas. The temple of Lord Vishwanath is most important and dedicated to Lord Shiva. Shakti temple is another famous temple, which is dedicated to the goddess of power (Shakti). Kali temple, Ekadash Rudra temple and Parashuram temple are also visible. The fair on Makar Sankranti is celebrated here for seven days. The Nehru Institute of Mountaineering is located here and giving training to the young. Ujali, one Km. from here, is a colony of saints and sages. Uttarkashi is 28 Km. from Dharasu.

GANGORRI:

On the route to Gangotri this place is 4 Km. from Uttarkashi. Pilgrims can go to Dodital Lake on foot from here. This lake is full of natural beauty and situated at a height of 3024 M. above sea-level.

MANERI:

The Maneri-Bhali Project Dam (39 M. high) is being constructed here on Bhagirathi river and this place is 158 Km. from Rishikesh.

BHATWARI:

A small market is located in this small important town and this place is 19 Km. from Maneri. A bridle path is coming from Gangotri to this town and branches off to the holy shrine of Kedarnath.

GANGNANI:

This place is 191 Km. from Rishikesh and 171 Km. from Yamunotri and is a good place for meditation. Some years ago this was a popular halting place (chatti) when journeys were covered on foot to Gangotri, but it lost the importance as the buses continue on through here. The hot water springs are famous for bathing.

SUKHI:

This place is 18 Km. from Gangnani and situated at an altitude of 2744 M. above sea-level. From Uttarkashi to Gangotri road goes high and high and from this height every one can see the Himalayas view, crowned with snow.

JHALA:

This place is 7 Km. from Sukhi and the journey down to Jhala is an exciting descent of 305 meters. A road crosses to the left bank of Bhagirathi from Jhala and goes parallel to it.

HARSIL:

This small chatti is 6 Km. from Jhala. This is a beautiful valley of Ganga river and a temple of Lord Lakshmi Narain is visible here. From Harsil to Jangla is a delightful route.

LANKA CHATTI:

This is a little halting place and at present Lanka Chatti is the last motorhead and road from Harsil to here is not painted but metalled. Lanka Chatti is 235 Km. from Rishikesh and 215 Km. from Yamunotri. The onward journey to Gangotri is to be completed on foot, by ponies and dandies. The road is straight and it again crosses the Bhagirathi here.

BHAIRON GHATI:

The last halting place is Bhairon Ghati and it is 3 Km. trek and route must be covered on foot. Now a motor bridge is under construction here and expected to be completed very soon. The confluence of Bhagirathi and Jahnvi looks bright and beautiful. Some vehicles are taken in parts by trolleys across the Jahnvi and reassembled at Bhairon Ghati, therefore, now motors and jeeps are available from here to Gangotri for a distance of 10 Km. but transport charges are very high.



GAUMUKH

Gaumukh is the recognized source of Ganga. The Gangotri Glacier which is 6 to 8 Km. in width and nearly 24 Km. in length is situated at a height of 4255 M. above sea-level and set in the heart of the Gangotri Peaks. The best time to visit Gaumukh is June to September every year. Before June and after October the bridle path can be full of ice.

Pilgrims take just one dip in the ice-cold water of Gaumukh and the orthodox Hindus believe that even a single dip in the Gaumukh water is sufficient to wash away all one's sins and fulfill the purpose of one's life. If a single bath is so precious, who can calculate the value of a number of baths? About 3 Km. above Gaumukh, between the two glaciers, Meru and Gangotri, there extends a great plain called "Tapovan". It is an extremely

beautiful spot that captivates the mind by its natural charms. Nandavan is quite opposite Tapovan. The famous Mt. Sumeru is only a few Km. from here.

GAURI KUND AND DEVGHAT:

The small stream Dev Ganga flows from Devghat. Just across the Kedar Ganga a group of peaks Ganga Mandir, Shivling, Brahma and Shankaracharya are visible and Ganga flows on her way through lush valleys and fertile plains from Gauri Kund, until at last she reaches sea, i.e. Bay of Bengal.

GANGOTRI TO KEDARNATH:

While going from Gangotri to Kedarnath pilgrims return to Tehri via Uttarkashi and Dharasu. Tehri is 165 Km. from here. From Tehri are two routes going to Kedarnath. First is via Ghansali, Chirbatri & Tilwara. From this route Kedarnath is 183 Km. Second route going via Srinagar, Rudraprayag & Tilwara. The journey by this route is 178 Km.

On the whole the last point of journey is pleasant. The sweet smelling and blooming jungles enliven the spirit of pilgrims and cheerfully infuse a strength to reach the destination.

GANGOTRI TO KEDARNATH BY TREKKING ROUTES:

This is the old yatra route which passes through hills and valleys. The route is difficult but the meadows of Belak, Panwali, Matya, Kuini and Tali are full of flowers of every colour and set amidst beautiful snow peaks. While going to Kedarnath from Gangotri on foot, return to Mala (73 Km. from Gangotri) via Bhatwari by bus and this is the place where the trek commences.

Ashrams, dharamshalas and rest houses are available every where on the trekking route. In this way there are two trekking routes from Yamunotri to Gangotri. First is Hanuman Chatti to Gangotri via Tugidhar, Oochadhar and Kalrigd. Gangotri is 4 Km. in the north direction of Uttarkashi. Second route is Gangnani to Nakuri via Simli and Singot. Nakuri is 6 Km. south of Uttarkashi. It is necessary that trekkers must be physically fit.

CHAPTER IX

JOURNEY TO MANASAROVAR AND KAILASH

Where any one goes to Manasarovar and Kailash, it certainly reminds him of the past glories of our great country, and one who visits these places is really proud of having been there and satisfied with the zenith of these glorious places. Badrinath to Mt. Kailash is about 305 Km. and Almora to Mount Kailash 405 Km.

Now-a-days, along all the routes to Kailash - especially along the Almora route - conveniences are steadily on the increase and hardships on the decrease. Yet, even today, a journey to Kailash is no joke, but compared with the other routes, the Almora route is naturally easier and less taxing on account of natural facilities and artificially contrived

conveniences. Best time for the yatra of Manasarovar and Kailash is second week of June and all general preparation to be made at Almora. For journey to Mansarovar Lake motor vehicles are available up to Kalapani from Almora. The balance journey from Kalapani to the Manasarovar Lake must be covered on foot. Further journey to Mount Kailash must be covered on foot via Jugumba Guha, Barkha and Darchan. Darchan village stands in the valley quite close to Kailash. It is noteworthy that all along the routes the villagers render various kinds of service to the pilgrims. A way also going to Mt. Kailash, the highest mountains in the world, and from Tholingamata, Dappa village is situated at a distance of about 50 Km. and it has a Buddhist temple. Famous marketing centre Gyanimamand is situated to the north east of Dappa village. Mt. Kailash is situated about 60 Km. north east of Ghayanima, which is a small but busy town.

MOUNT KAILASH THE ABODE OF SRI MAHADEVA

The holy peak of Mt. Kailash is situated at a height of 23,000 feet and looks like a lovely tower 40 to 50 Km. in circumference and it is perpetually covered with snow and appears dazzling white in the sun. It is also the silver mountain famous in the Puranas as the abode of Sri Mahadeva, and it is altogether peerless in its divine beauty. The sight, from Darchan, of Mt. Kailash and its surroundings looks spotlessly white peak on the north and the vast, circular, deep blue lake, Rakshasathal, to the south, is indeed a most beautiful one. Rakshasathal is as big as Manasarovar and most beautiful but pilgrims do not regard it as so holy or worship.

The Lake of Manasarovar lies to the east of Rakshasathal. The circumambulation (parikrama) of Mt. Kailash is a holy act, which is regarded as an essential part of a visit to the sacred mountain. The lamas of the place fully believe that those who are able to complete the circumambulation have fulfilled the purpose of human life. There is a festival (mela) celebrated once in twelve years at Kailash and several Tibetan lamas and householders flock to the valley of Kailash.

MANASAROVAR LAKE A TREASURE HOUSE OF HOLINESS

The Lake Manasarovar is situated to the south east of Kailash and distance is about 25 Km. Passing across the vast valley at the foot of Mt. Kailash, and crossing several streams that fall into Lake Rakshasathal (Rakshasa Ravana performed his penance here) there is a village called Varkka. In the north east corner is a Gumma called Chiyu which is situated between Rakshasathal and Manasarovar. Pilgrims can enjoy the full view of the holy Lake Manasarovar from here. The Manasarovar Lake lies 16,000 feet above sea-level and surrounded on all sides by bleak, naked, black and granite mountains whose peaks are covered with snow and it is the most beautiful sight among the very beautiful sights of the earth and there is no any other sight in the world to match the lake in its

beauty. A large number of small swans are visible on the surface of the lake and flocks of swans are raising weird cry.

The crystal and clear water of the lake is more warm compared with the water of Ganga at Gangotri, the water of Mandakini at Kedarnath and the water of Alaknanda at Badrinath, because water in the lake stands still and remains exposed to sunlight.

Manasarovar Lake is a treasure house of beauty, sublimity and holiness. The holy lake is over 70 Km. in circumference and perfectly circular in shape. On all sides it is surrounded by snow clad mountains and the water in the lake is like a sheet of glass. At the eight corners of the lake stand eight monasteries occupied by holy lamas, who spend their lives in penance. In the Puranas the queen of Lake Manasarovar is described as being adorned with golden lotuses and frequented by royal swans which live upon pearls. Above all, the lake is in the vicinity of Mt. Kailash.



—: Badrish Panchatan :—